



MAINE

March 21, 2023

Maine State Legislature
Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Re: LD 1002

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the committee,

No Kid Hungry Maine writes in support of LD 1002 “An Act To Require A Lunch Period of at Least 30 Minutes for Students and Reduce Food Waste.”

Through our No Kid Hungry campaign, Share Our Strength works with partners such as Full Plates Full Potential, lawmakers, educators, and businesses to identify and eliminate the barriers that may prevent children and families from accessing healthy and nutritious meals. Approximately, 1 in 6 children in Maine could face hunger this year, and school meals play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children and Maine’s families.

LD 1002 would require Maine schools to allow at least 30 minutes for students to eat lunch as part of the National School Lunch Program. When kids don’t have enough time to eat, they often leave food on the tray. This results in more food waste, and students not benefitting from the nutrition included. LD 1002 would also direct school districts to allow adequate time for recess and to schedule recess before lunch, a best practice that encourages students to sit and eat lunch after being outside and getting exercise. Having recess before lunch enables students to expend more energy and thus be hungrier at lunch time, as well as prevent students from rushing through lunch for more play time at recess. Research has shown enabling students to have sufficient time to eat with longer lunch periods (~ 30 minutes) and having recess before lunch increases consumption of the school meal.¹

Again, we strongly support LD 1002, which would ensure Maine students have sufficient time to eat nutritious school lunches. This law supports what we have long understood, that school meals are a critical tool for students in their school day enabling them to learn and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 731-8662 or bdowney@strength.org.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Downey
Associate Director, Government Relations and Advocacy
Share Our Strength

¹ Cohen, J. F.W., et al. Strategies to Improve School Meal Consumption: A Systematic Review. Nutrients. 2021.